



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position Description

Title: Midewin Trail Steward

Purpose: Trail stewards assist the U.S. Forest Service staff at Midewin in establishing and maintaining a multi-use trail system intended to enhance the enjoyment and safety of trail users.

Duties and Responsibilities: Trail stewards walk their trail segment, at minimum, once a month to monitor safety conditions, especially April-October. Stewards must complete and submit a National Quality Standards (NQS) checklist, found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/midewin/workingtogether/volunteering/?cid=stelprdb5292679>, for each trail visit and report safety concerns immediately to the program leader. Stewards must wear a blaze orange vest at all times provided by Midewin. Stewards may take on additional responsibilities in addition to visually monitoring trails. Midewin will provide all tools, plants, materials and safety gear required to complete tasks. Other responsibilities may include the following:

- Complete species list along trail segment
- Document trail conditions (safety hazards and erosion problems, new invaders)
- Report and/or repair signage and structure conditions
- Report unauthorized trails and trail misuse
- Check parking area for hazards or vandalism
- Remove small, detached branches from trail
- Report large overhangs or trees across trail
- Clear litter and properly dispose of garbage.
- Removal of debris blocking water drainage
- Remove/control invasive vegetation
- Install and/or maintain benches or trail amenities
- Greet visitors to provide trail etiquette, Midewin's history and mission.
- Attain certification to apply herbicide to invasive plants using various equipment and herbicide provided by Midewin.
- Plant native plants along trails
- Train new trail stewards
- Fill brochure bins or post approved notifications on trail head board.
- Lead volunteer days after acquiring appropriate training such as CPR/First Aid.

Department and Location: Under the direction of the Recreation Technician and/or Landscape Architect, stewards may have several jobs within Midewin's Public Services Team. The primary work locations start at the Iron Bridge, River Road or Explosives Road Trailheads. Trainings and meetings take place at the Welcome Center.

Qualifications: Stewards are responsible for their own transportation to trailheads. Stewards must be able to safely hike or bike their trail segment (1-2 miles long). Previous experience with nature trails and plant identification are very helpful. Some information is most efficiently reported online, so internet access and email is required. Stewards will come in contact with many visitors so interpretation of Midewin's history, mission, challenges and accomplishments is important. This type of work is easier and safer with a partner, so this should be highly considered (especially for stewards without a cell phone). Certain activities require working with a partner such as herbiciding and operating power tools.

Time Commitment: Midewin asks that stewards commit to a minimum of a year and visit their site at least once a month. Trail stewards are able to work on their trails any day of the year from 4am-10pm. There is a general restoration volunteer day every Thursday from 9am-2:30pm and the last Thursday each month is dedicated to trail maintenance for volunteers to help trail stewards. These are optional, but helpful for getting additional help and working with other stewards. Staff leads quarterly trainings to discuss invasive plant targets and general seasonal needs.

Training: All stewards are required to complete the in-house orientation about tools, reporting, herbicide protocols, trail specifics, etc. Midewin trail rules, per handbook, must be followed at all times. New stewards are required to work with experienced stewards until they are comfortable taking on a segment of their own. Staff is also available to walk trails with stewards as an initial orientation and occasionally throughout the year. Staff leads quarterly trainings to discuss invasive plant targets and general seasonal needs. Stewards are encouraged to acquire their herbicide license through the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Training materials are provided and license fee is paid for by Midewin (License renewal fee will not be paid if it is not used). Other certifications/trainings that will be offered and paid for include government motor vehicle ID card and refresher training, background check (if required) to access certain buildings, trailer training, power tools, UTV training and First Aid/CPR. Additional responsibilities could become applicable or available to this position in the future that might require additional training and/or certification. These additional responsibilities will be determined by the program managers and offered to selected volunteers.

Working Conditions/Physical Effort: *Stewards are covered by the Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) while performing duties described by this position description during the season(s) listed or scheduled shifts.* Stewards must read, sign and consent to the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes emergency plans, safety requirements and recommended best practices. Stewards may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions & allergens
- Walking on uneven ground for a distance of 1-2 miles
- Carrying and using a variety of hand tools and power tools
- Handling, mixing and applying herbicide

Benefits: Stewards will feel ownership in Midewin's natural areas and trails and improve recreational opportunities for visitors. Working outside is a great workout and very therapeutic. Midewin's volunteer staff receives ongoing recognition from their program leader and other staff. Volunteers that contribute three or more individual volunteer visits in the fiscal year will receive an invitation to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or US Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteers.

Midewin's volunteer program is coordinated through a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy.